

Hamer language

Hamer or **Hamer-Banna** (Hamer: *hámar aapó*) is a language within the South Omotic branch of the Afroasiatic language family. It is spoken primarily in southern Ethiopia by the Hamar people, Banna people, and by speakers of Karo.

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Hamer-Banna	
Native to	Ethiopia
Region	South Omo Region
Ethnicity	Hamar, Banna, Karo speakers
Native speakers	74,000 (2007 census) ^[1]
Language family	Afro-Asiatic - Omotic - Aroid Hamer-Banna
Dialects	Hamar Banna Karo
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	amf
Glottolog	hame1242 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/hame1242) ^[2]

Phonology

Consonants

Hamer has six places of articulation for consonants, and eleven manners of articulation, though the system is not entirely orthogonal.

	Bilabial		Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Pulmonic Stops	p b	t d			k g	q	ʔ
Ingressive Stops			ɗ		ɠ		
Ejectives		tʼ		ɕʼ			
Fricatives		z s	ʃ		x		h
Affricate		ʈ		ɕ ɕʝ			
Nasals	m	n		ɲ			

Flap		r
Lateral		l
Semivowels	w	j

/p/ may optionally be realized as [ɸ] in any position, except as /pp/ and /mp/, in which cases it is always realized as [p].^[3] Several phonemes have special intervocalic or prevocalic realizations:

/VbV/: [β]
 /Vka/: [x]
 /#qa/: [qʰ]
 /#qo, #qu/: [ʔ]
 /VbV/: [b], [β]
 /VdV/: [d], [ʔ]
 /#tʰa, #tʰi/: [tʰʰ]
 /VtʰV/: [tʰ]^[4]

/n/ assimilates to a following velar (i.e., as [ŋ]).

Consonant length is distinctive non-initially. Long /r/ is realized as a trilled /r/.

Vowels

There are five basic vowels

i	u
e	o
a	

The vowels are further subdivided into two main categories (with a third being a surface "umlaut" phenomenon (see below)). Category I vowels are shorter, pharyngealized, and have retracted tongue root. Category II vowels are longer, glottalized, and have advanced tongue root.

Vowel Harmony exists in that every root word and every suffix belongs to either category I or II. When the category of a root and its suffix do not agree, a kind of umlauting takes place. An umlauted vowel retains its basic place of articulation, and is pronounced between the corresponding category I and II vowels, i.e. of medium length, and unmarked for pharyngealization, glottalization or tongue root position. Generally, the vowel(s) of the suffix undergo umlauting, but there is a set of "strong" suffixes which retain their category, and cause the vowels of the root to undergo umlauting.

There is a sixth non-phonemic vowel, /ə/, which appears in speech epenthetically to "break up" otherwise invalid consonant clusters. There is no need to consider this a phoneme, and no definitive reason for it to require a grapheme, as it occurs entirely predictably as part of what is essentially an allophonic process.

Syllable and word structure

Syllable structure is simply (C)V(C), though syllable-final consonants are rare. Strings of at least three vowels are documented. Strings of more than two consonants are not documented. There are a large number of (mostly very simple) rules governing metathesis and epenthesis when consonant clusters appear. In summary, there are three sorts of consonant cluster: "valid", "special", and "invalid". Valid clusters undergo

no change between their underlying and surface forms. Special clusters undergo some kind of (generally metathetic) transformation in their surface forms. Invalid clusters insert a non-phonemic /ə/ between the two consonants to create their surface forms.

Orthography

There is no official writing system for Hamar, though several romanization schemes have been proposed, along with a Gə'əz orthography. As yet, there is no movement for official recognition of any of these systems.

"Lydall" romanization

This is the romanization used by Jean Lydall. It is perhaps the *de facto* standard, simply by being the one in which the majority of the existing corpus is presented.

Consonants

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Pulmonic Stops	b p	d t	j c	g k		'
Ejective Stop					q'	
Ingressive Stops	B	D		G		
Fricatives	f	z s	š	x		h
Affricate		ts				
Nasals	m	n	ɲ	ŋ		
Flap		r				
Lateral		l				
Semivowels	w		y			

Category I vowels

ɪ ʊ
 ε ɔ
 ʌ

Category II vowels

i u
 e o
 a

Umlauted vowels

Vowels which have been umlauted are written using the letter for their original sound, combined with an underline.

No marking of stress occurs.

Gə'əz orthography

Letters are provided below with their traditional Amharic names. Rows marked in dark red have special meanings that cannot fully be explained in the table: the 'Älf row is used for Category II vowels without a preceding consonant, while the 'Äyn row is used for Category I vowels without a preceding consonant.

		ä [ə]	u	i	a	e	ə [ɛ]	o	wa	yä [jə]
<u>Hoy</u>	h	ሀ	ሁ	ሂ	ሃ	ሄ	ህ	ሆ		
<u>Läwe</u>	l	ለ	ሉ	ሊ	ላ	ሌ	ል	ሎ	ሏ	
<u>Häwt</u>	x	ሐ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	ሖ	ሗ	
<u>May</u>	m	መ	ሙ	ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	ሞ	ሟ	ሟ
<u>Śäwt</u>	f	ሠ	ሡ	ሢ	ሣ	ሤ	ሥ	ሦ	ሧ	
<u>Rə's</u>	r	ረ	ሩ	ሪ	ራ	ሬ	ር	ሮ	ሯ	ሯ
<u>Sat</u>	s	ሰ	ሱ	ሲ	ሳ	ሴ	ስ	ሶ	ሷ	
<u>Ḳaf</u>	q'	ቀ	ቁ	ቂ	ቃ	ቄ	ቅ	ቆ	ቇ	
<u>Bet</u>	b	በ	ቡ	ቢ	ባ	ቤ	ብ	ቦ	ቧ	
	b	ቨ	ቩ	ቪ	ቫ	ቬ	ቭ	ቮ	ቯ	
<u>Täwe</u>	t	ተ	ቱ	ቲ	ታ	ቼ	ት	ቶ	ቷ	
	c	ቸ	ቹ	ቺ	ቻ	ቼ	ች	ቸ	ቻ	
<u>Nähas</u>	n	ነ	ኑ	ኒ	ና	ኔ	ን	ኖ	ኗ	
<u>'Älf</u>	'	ኦ	ኡ	ኢ	ኣ	ኤ	ኦ	ኧ	ከ	
<u>Kaf</u>	k	ከ	ኩ	ኪ	ካ	ኤ	ከ	ኮ	ክ	
<u>Wäwe</u>	w	ዐ	ዑ	ዒ	ዓ	ዔ	ዕ	ዖ		
<u>'Äyn</u>	'									

		0	0̣	0̣̣	0̣̣̣	0̣̣̣̣	0̣̣̣̣̣	0̣̣̣̣̣̣		
<u>Zäy</u>	z	H	Ḥ	Ḥ̣	Ḥ̣̣	Ḥ̣̣̣	Ḥ̣̣̣̣	Ḥ̣̣̣̣̣	Ḥ̣̣̣̣̣̣	
<u>Yämān</u>	y	Ŷ	Ỵ̂	Ỵ̣̂	Ỵ̣̣̂	Ỵ̣̣̣̂	Ỵ̣̣̣̣̂	Ỵ̣̣̣̣̣̂		
<u>Dänt</u>	d	Ḍ	Ḍ̣	Ḍ̣̣	Ḍ̣̣̣	Ḍ̣̣̣̣	Ḍ̣̣̣̣̣	Ḍ̣̣̣̣̣̣	Ḍ̣̣̣̣̣̣̣	
	ḏ	Ḑ	Ḑ̣	Ḑ̣̣	Ḑ̣̣̣	Ḑ̣̣̣̣	Ḑ̣̣̣̣̣	Ḑ̣̣̣̣̣̣	Ḑ̣̣̣̣̣̣̣	
	ḑ	Ḓ	Ḓ̣	Ḓ̣̣	Ḓ̣̣̣	Ḓ̣̣̣̣	Ḓ̣̣̣̣̣	Ḓ̣̣̣̣̣̣	Ḓ̣̣̣̣̣̣̣	
<u>Gäml</u>	g	Ḡ	Ḡ̣	Ḡ̣̣	Ḡ̣̣̣	Ḡ̣̣̣̣	Ḡ̣̣̣̣̣	Ḡ̣̣̣̣̣̣	Ḡ̣̣̣̣̣̣̣	
	ḡ	Ḣ	Ḥ̇	Ḥ̣̇	Ḥ̣̣̇	Ḥ̣̣̣̇	Ḥ̣̣̣̣̇	Ḥ̣̣̣̣̣̇	Ḥ̣̣̣̣̣̣̇	
<u>Ṣädäy</u>	ṡ	Ṣ	Ṣ̣	Ṣ̣̣	Ṣ̣̣̣	Ṣ̣̣̣̣	Ṣ̣̣̣̣̣	Ṣ̣̣̣̣̣̣	Ṣ̣̣̣̣̣̣̣	
<u>Äf</u>	f	Ḟ	Ḟ̣	Ḟ̣̣	Ḟ̣̣̣	Ḟ̣̣̣̣	Ḟ̣̣̣̣̣	Ḟ̣̣̣̣̣̣	Ḟ̣̣̣̣̣̣̣	Ḟ̣̣̣̣̣̣̣̣
<u>Psa</u>	p	Ṗ	Ṗ̣	Ṗ̣̣	Ṗ̣̣̣	Ṗ̣̣̣̣	Ṗ̣̣̣̣̣	Ṗ̣̣̣̣̣̣	Ṗ̣̣̣̣̣̣̣	

Morphology

Nouns

Nouns do not have inherent gender or number, but may be inflected masculine, feminine, and plural, all three of which are contrastive (that is, a noun cannot be inflected for both a gender and for plurality). While these inflections are not obligatory, they trigger agreement on adjectives and verbs. The inflection markers are:

Masculine Feminine Plural

-â, -tâ -no, -tóno -na

The forms beginning with "t" may only be attached directly to the root, and are usually used with animate nouns. The other forms may be attached to the root or to the stem.^[5]

For inanimate nouns, marked masculinity is usually diminutive, while marked femininity is augmentative. E.g., a clay pot is *dáa*. *Daatâ* (masculine) signifies a small clay pot, while *dáano* (feminine) is a large clay pot. Cross-linguistically, the use of masculine as diminutive is unusual, as is free gender inflection.^[6]

Notes

1. *Hamer-Banna* (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/amf/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Hamer-Banna" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/hame1242>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. *Petrollino* (2016), p. 11
4. *Petrollino* (2016), p. 10–22
5. *Petrollino* (2016), p. 72–73
6. *Petrollino* (2016), p. 78

References

- Lydall, Jean (1976): "Hamer" in: Bender, M. Lionel (ed.): *The Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia*. East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University. pp. 393–438.
- Lydall, Jean (1988): Gender, Number and Size in Hamar. in: Bechhaus-Gerst, Marianne and Fritz Serzisko (eds.): *Cushitic-Omotic: Papers from the International Symposium on Cushitic and Omotic Languages, Cologne, January 6–7, 1986*. Hamburg. pp 77–90.
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- Petrollino, Sara (2016). *A grammar of Hamar: a South Omotic Language of Ethiopia* (Doctoral thesis). Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag. [hdl:1887/44090](https://hdl.handle.net/1887/44090) (<https://hdl.handle.net/1887%2F44090>).

External links

- *World Atlas of Language Structures* information on *Hamer* (http://wals.info/languoid/lect/wals_code_hmr)
- *Rosetta Project: Hamer-Banna Swadesh List* (https://archive.org/stream/rosettaproject_amf_swadesh-1/amf.txt)

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